

both photos Carl Stearns

Pinch Mantle climber: Jim Horton

Hey - ya want to go to Stone Mountain?

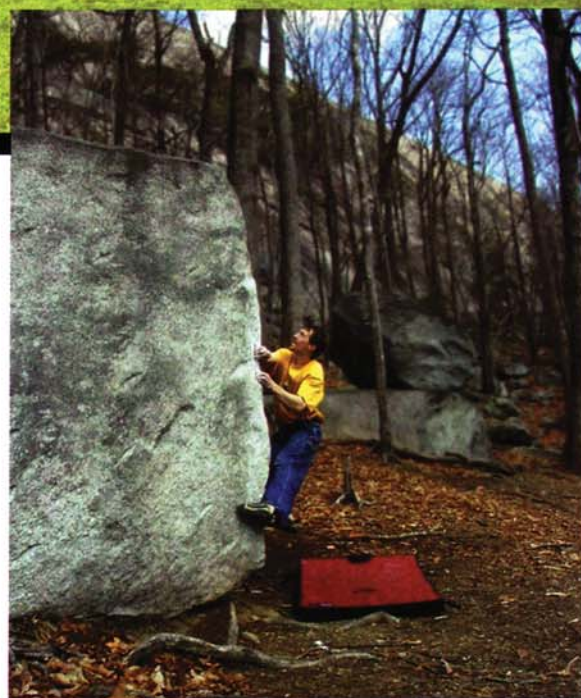
If you say that to most boulder toads they'll probably look at you like you just asked them to go play 18 holes of golf. I'm sure you've heard of Stone Mountain. Yes, that's right, the place with all the scary runout slabs. Well, as with any large piece of rock, there are several smaller pieces below it, ripe for the intrepid boulderer. I'm not just talking about slabs, although there are quite a few, I'm talking about the steep stuff.

People have been climbing at Stone for decades but few have taken the bouldering there very seriously. Sure, people would play around with the short stone after cranking a few pitches on the pristine granite slabs the place is famous for. No one really went there just to boulder. Some of the people who have taken it a little more seriously, however, (although you should never take something you do for fun too seriously) are Steve Pope, Kenny Hibbits, Eric Zschiesche, Bill Hoadley, Bill Mulvey, Richard Williams, John Provetero and myself.

Stone Mountain is a good winter spot to visit and not a bad little spot the rest of the year. Cooler, low humidity days will make the slopers feel a little friendlier. You can usually count on Stone being a good ten degrees warmer than nearby Boone and you'll find far less moisture. Most of the boulders are free standing so they dry out very fast after a rain. As a general rule, when the pavement is dry so is Stone.

Upon first glance most people's response has been "Where's all the holds?"

Holds? Who needs holds? At Stone you're climbing features. If you're looking for a big jug haul you're going to be sorely disappointed. But if you like slapping your way up



Jim Horton

Trail Side Arete climber: Brent Pilkington

... where's all the holds?

Holds? Who needs holds?

sloping aretes and doing the seemingly impossible you'll find yourself smiling at the top of most of these lines.

Stone is one of the most aesthetic boulder fields I've had the pleasure of visiting. In the late afternoon you're guaranteed to see deer grazing in the field next to the boulders. With lines like *Savage Henry*, *Ruffage*, *Karmage*, *Rage*, *Ravage*, *The Thumb Slab*, *Damage* and any one of the Whale problems you're also guaranteed some beautiful bouldering.

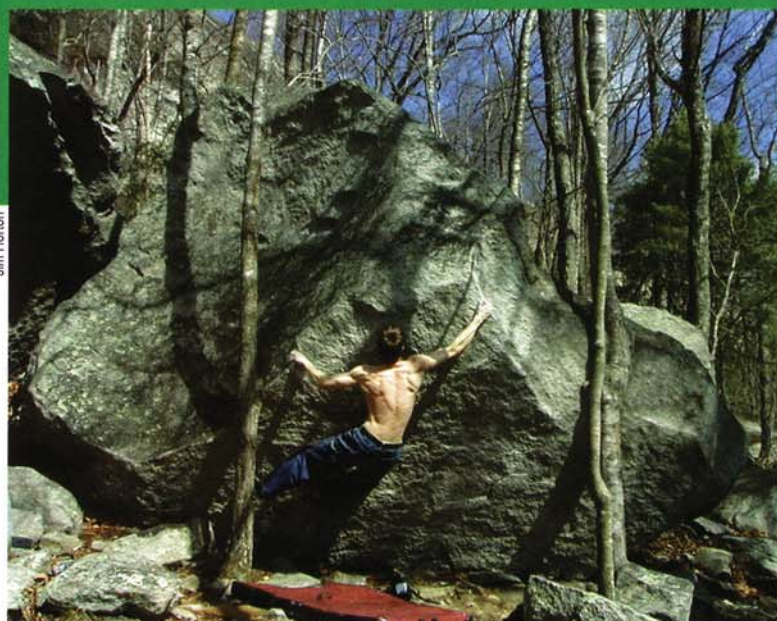
The Problems

The following problems are what I would consider some of the best.

No one knows who got the first ascent of some of these lines, so a few of the names I use here are more like a description than a name, out of respect for those who may have done them before.

The first obvious problem you'll see is an unassuming little arete just past the climbing info board. It starts with both hands on a crimpy little sidepull and goes straight up. We've always called it the *Trailside Arete* and it's a classic. I just wish it was twice as tall.

The Patio Boulder is probably the next thing that will jump out at you. It's the most striking boulder in the park and it's a great place to leave your stuff as you scamper through the rocks. This boulder sports several proud lines. Luckily some of the tallest are pretty easy which is a good thing because you're probably not going to walk away from the fall. It also has some bold, hard lines on the left side and some hard slab on the right.



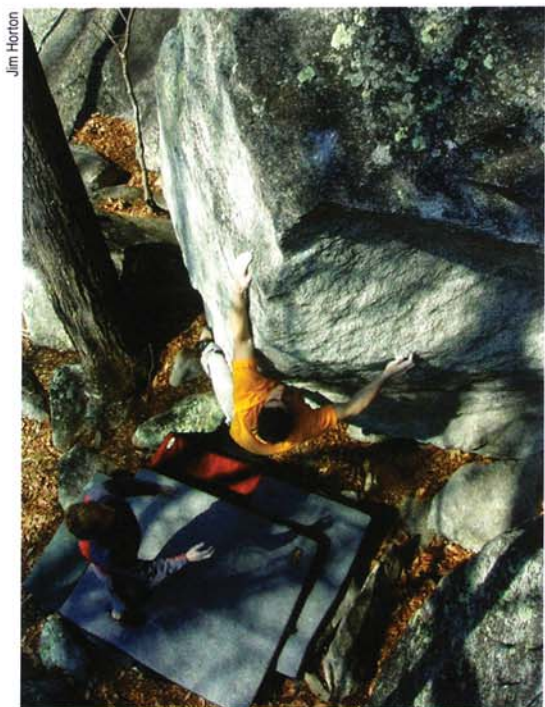
Skagg Baron climber: Brent Pilkington

This problem offers some of the best pullin' in the state.

you don't key into the right body position. The *Scoop Slab* just to its left is another good line, especially if you don't use the arete.

Another cool little ruffian is *Footloose and Style Free*. It's located on a boulder above *Savage Henry*. It traverses right to left on a very slopy lip with bad footholds... really bad footholds.

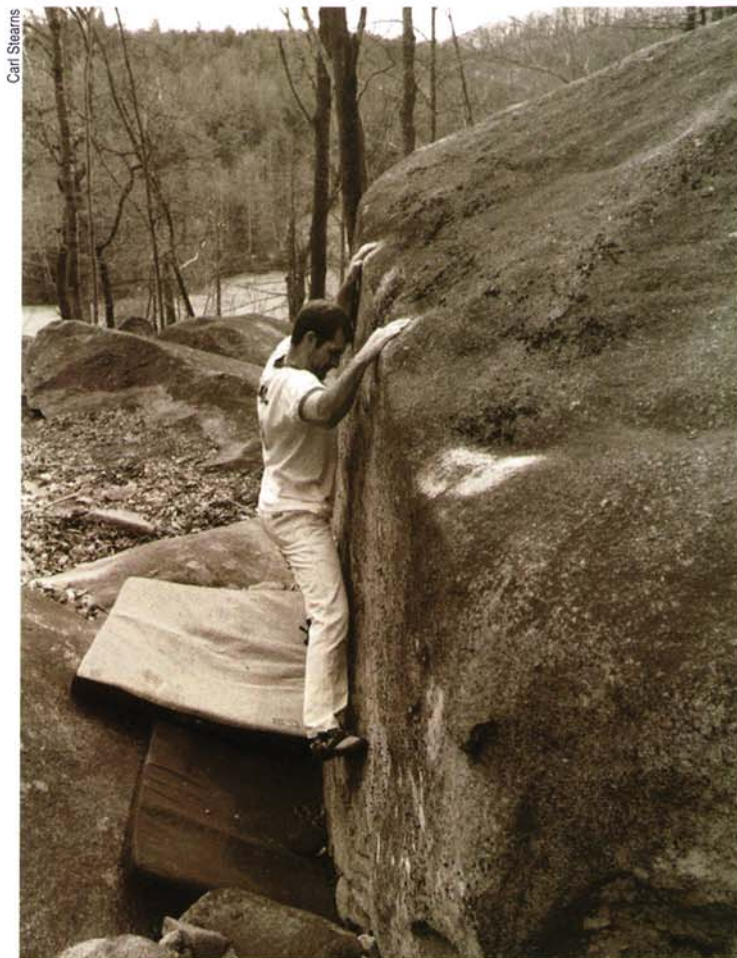
The Whale boulder is a great spot to satisfy your lust for



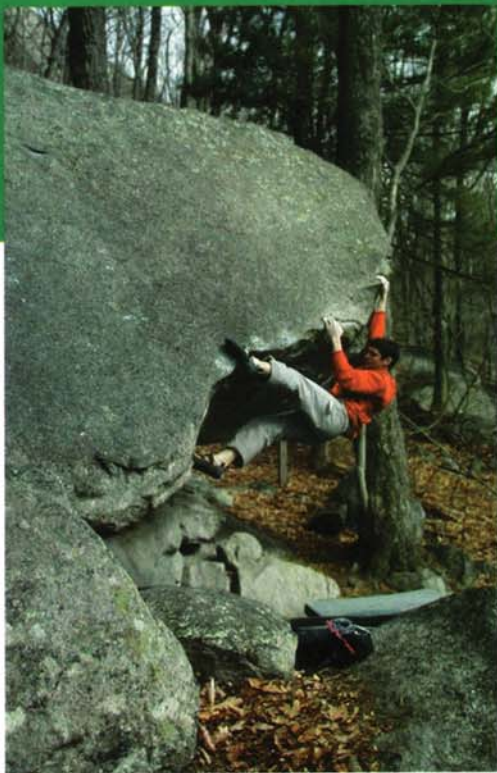
Savage Henry climber: Sean Barb

Another standout is a blunt arete called *Savage Henry*. It's located above the Patio Boulder. This problem offers some of the best pullin' in the state. It starts with a nasty looking left hand undercling and a small right hand side pull. From that point on you get to enjoy some cool pulling to a slopy topout just the right height off the ground (about 14 feet). You'll also find a great little campus problem on the left side of this boulder. *Doctor Gonzo* is between the *Campus Problem* and *Savage Henry*. It starts with a right hand on an undercling and your left on a little edge and goes straight up. The crux of this one is getting off the ground.

Skagg Baron is located on the boulder next to *Savage Henry* and is another must do. It starts with both hands on an obvious big hold and goes out and right to some positive edges where it tops out. It can be a barndoor nightmare if

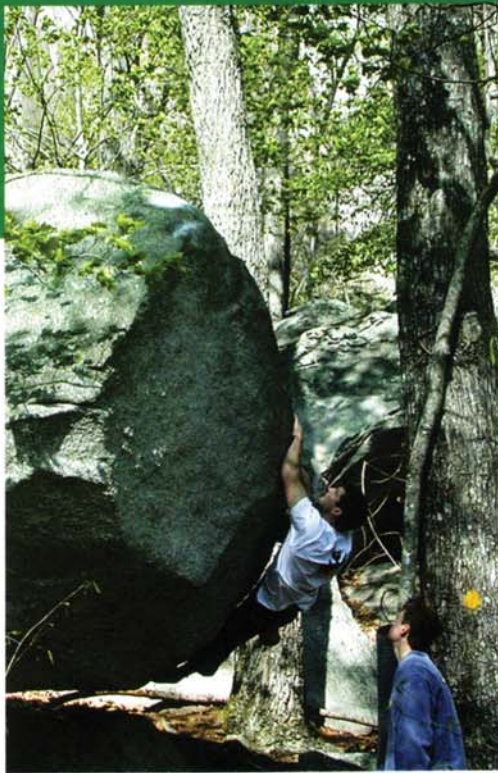


Footloose & Style Free climber: Robert Semple



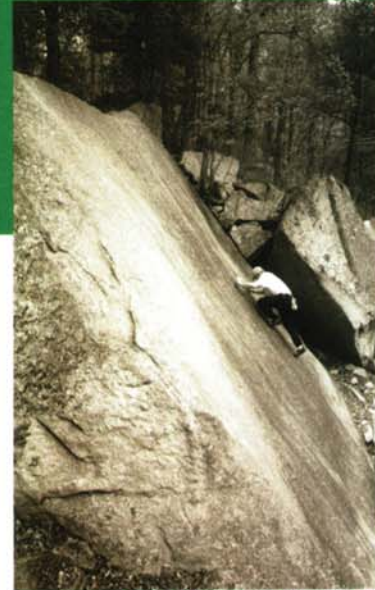
Jim Horton

Left Whale climber: Sean Barb



Jim Horton

Right Whale climber: Sean Barb



Carl Stearns

Stone Mountain Simulator
climber: Steve Pope

slopers. It has two proud overhanging, sloping aretes, a cool roof problem and a couple sweet slabs. The *Left Whale* arete is one of the prettiest lines in the field. It starts low on the left arete and climbs out some beautiful perfectly textured slopers to a fairly relaxed, yet exhilarating topout. The *Right Whale* is pretty much the same thing in reverse but maybe a little more slopey and not quite as long. The roof problem is a tough character and if you're not at least six feet tall you're going to find it a really burly and uncompromising one.

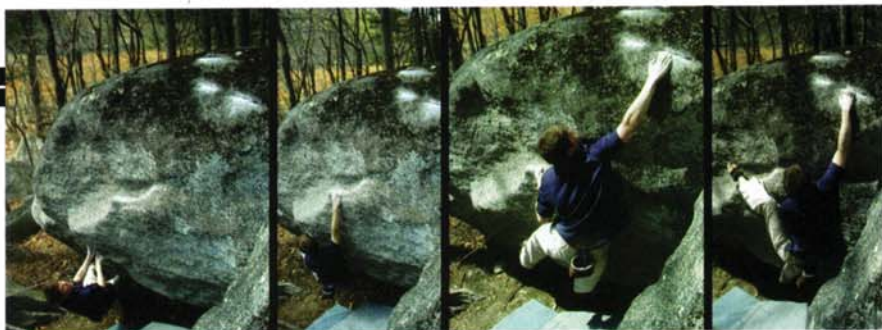
Down the hill below the Whale boulder is an impressive old-school classic called the *Stone Mountain Simulator*. It's a good place to experience those famous Stone Mountain slab runouts without the 500 foot fall - it only has a 25 foot fall. I've seen more than one strong climber with that familiar glint of fear in their eyes on this one.

Not had enough slopers yet? Take a turn on *Ruffage*. It is located to the right of the *Stone Mountain Simulator* and requires some creative beta. It starts on the obvious big sloper at the base and travels up the arching lip. You'll find the low underclings quite helpful as well. *Hollow Man* is a bit harder and starts in the underclings and goes straight up.

The Hueco boulder sits in the back of the main concentration of boulders and has three cool lines and one bizarre little enigma. *Karmage* is the hardest. It starts in the big hueco in the center of the boulder and travels out to the far right topout. *Damage* starts in the same hueco and tops out straight up.

earlier is *The Melon Theory*. It starts on the big ledge hold on the left side of the boulder and goes straight up. You need to try this one at least once - you may walk away with an extra gimmick in your pocket for future use.

As the winter season drew to a close I starting working a line dubbed *Rage*. It's one of the hardest lines I've had the pleasure of getting to know. It starts in a thin horizontal slot at which point you have to make a huge move out and left to a nasty sloper. Matching on this sloper and moving your feet off the starting foot hold is probably the crux, but it ain't over after that. You then have to pull through about three other rugged sloper moves to a hard top out. This thing seems to keep building in difficulty until you're standing on top of it. As a matter of fact you might fall off after you're standing on top. One night I was thinking about this problem and actually fell out of the bed. Another time I was telling a friend about it and he fell down. I just hope you're sitting down while you're reading this so you won't take a nasty little tumble yourself. The thing's rough! *Ravage* is located just to the left of *Rage* and is another great sloper problem with a fairly stout topout.



Dudley Hammond

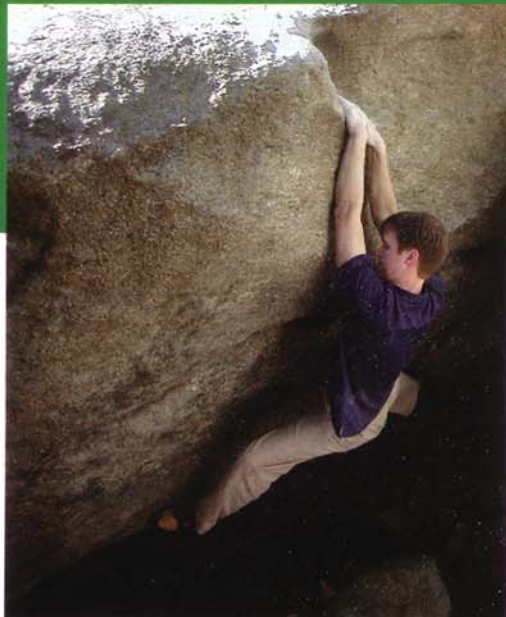
Karmage climber: Jim Horton



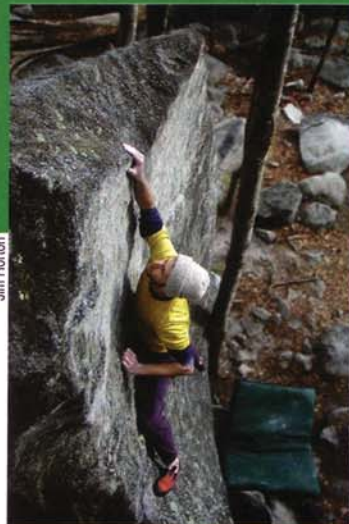
Jim Horton

Ruffage climber: John Provetero

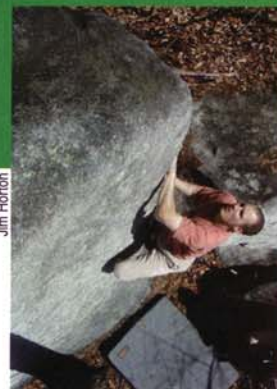
Stone Mountain *BOULDERING*



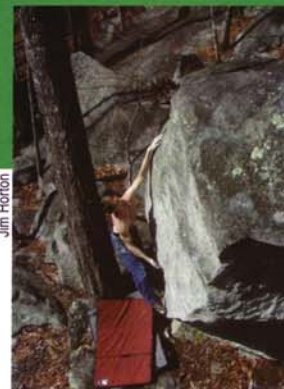
Rage climber: Jim Horton



The Scoop Slab
climber: Scott Freeman



Reach Arete
climber: Mike Dean



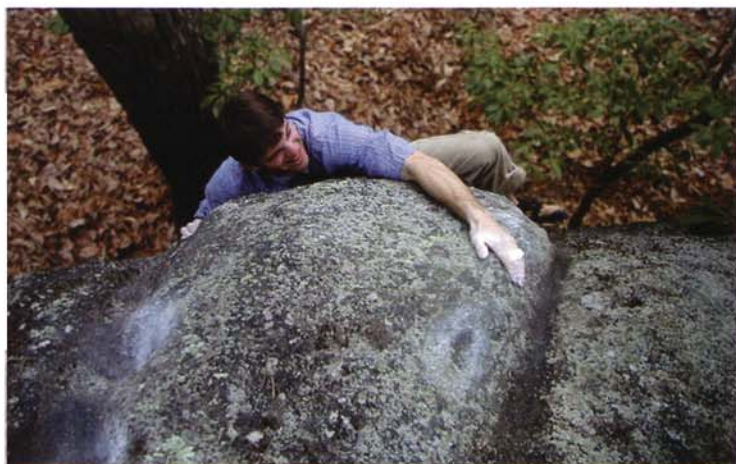
Dr. Gonze
climber: Brent Pilkington

The editor and the author would like to remind climbers to pay attention to the park closing time, which varies seasonally and is posted at the entrance. Because the park closes before dark, climbers often leave late, which doesn't do much for our relationship with the park Rangers. Thanks and enjoy!

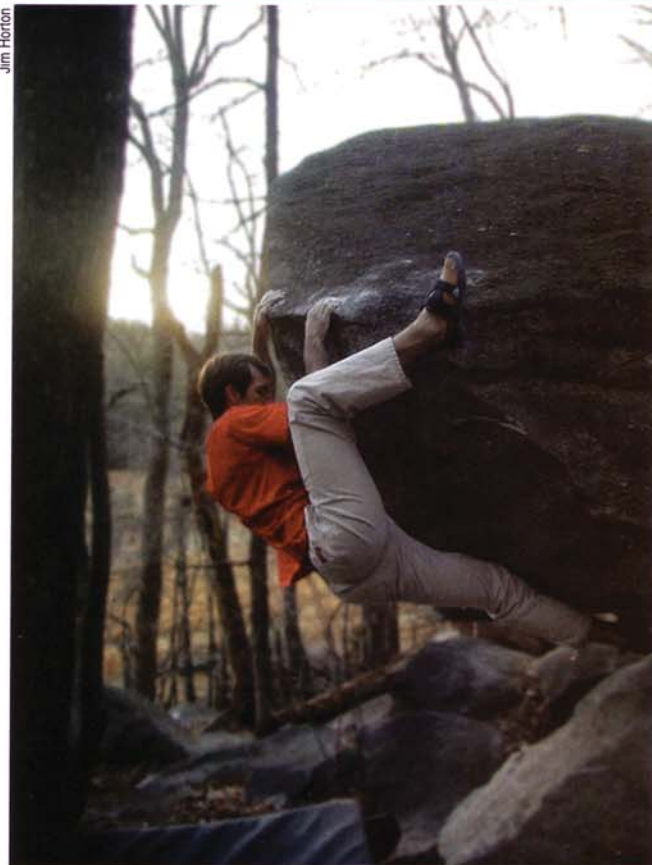
If you find yourself getting bored with the same old stuff or sick of the crowds or spew or rain or you want to down rate something that's not rated or maybe you just want to give your calves a rest from slabs and work your arms while you're there, you should give Stone Mountain bouldering a shot. If you think it's awesome you can thank me for telling you about it and if you think it's no good... blame Lynn and Carl... heh, heh, heh.

Jim Horton is a graphic designer from North Wilkesboro, NC. He is the originator of the famed Hound Ears Bouldering Competition, and has been putting up some of the best lines in the state for years. If you ever meet Jim out at the boulders, make sure you try to pick up a "jimmick" from his seemingly endless bag of tricks.

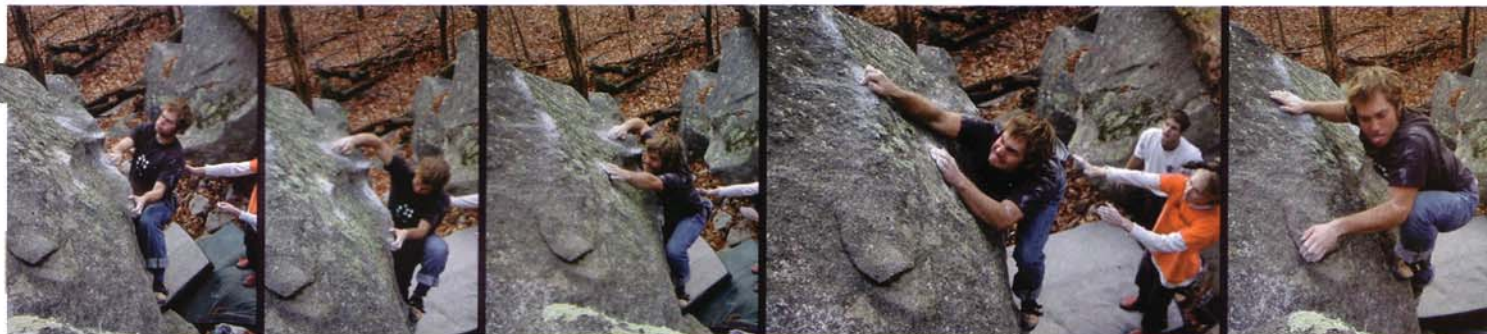
For more photos and a map
check out www.boulderdashmag.com



Runnel Reagan climber: Jon Lane



Right Whale climber: Robert Semple



Sloppy Joe climber: TJ "Faces" Barnes